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Claim Amendments

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A support bracket for securing wire fence elements to posts having T-shaped cross-sections with a leg and two cross-arms, the bracket comprising the following:

a first lateral retainer defining a first slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of a fence post, the first slot having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein;

a second lateral retainer defining a second slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of the fence post, the second slot having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein;
and

a third slot adapted and constructed to receive a leg of the fence post, the third slot being generally perpendicular to the first and second slots and having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the leg to be received therein;

first and second tabs extending from respective first and second lateral retainers, each adapted and constructed to facilitate outward movement of the first and second lateral retainers away from each other by force applied by a user to the first and second tabs, thus opening the slots for insertion and removal of the cross-arms therefrom;

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whereby the bracket can be mounted to the post in a first position in which the leg is received in the third slot, and a second position in which the leg extends opposite the third slot.

2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended) A support bracket according to claim ~~[[2]]~~ 1, wherein the bracket is fabricated from an electrically insulative material.
4. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 3, wherein the bracket is fabricated from a relatively flexible electrically insulative material.
5. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 4, wherein the bracket is fabricated from a thermoplastic material.
6. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 5, wherein the bracket is fabricated from polypropylene.
7. (Currently Amended) A support bracket according to claim ~~[[2]]~~ 1, further comprising at least one reinforcing rib adjacent to the third slot.

8. (Currently Amended) A support bracket for securing wire fence elements to posts having T-shaped cross-sections with a leg and two cross-arms, the bracket comprising the following:

a first lateral retainer defining a first slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of a fence post, the first slot having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein;

a second lateral retainer defining a second slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of the fence post, the second slot being generally aligned with the first slot and having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein; and

a third slot adapted and constructed to receive a leg of the fence post, the third slot being generally perpendicular to the first and second slots and having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the leg to be received therein;

first and second tabs extending from respective first and second lateral retainers, each adapted and constructed to facilitate outward movement of the first and second lateral retainers away from each other by force applied by a user to the first and second tabs, thus opening the slots for insertion and removal of the cross-arms therefrom;

whereby the bracket can be mounted to the post in a first position in which the leg is received in the third slot, and a second position in which the leg extends opposite the third slot.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) A support bracket according to claim [[9]] 8, wherein the bracket is fabricated from an electrically insulative material.
11. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 10, wherein the bracket is fabricated from a relatively flexible electrically insulative material.
12. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 11, wherein the bracket is fabricated from a thermoplastic material.
13. (Original) A support bracket according to claim 12, wherein the bracket is fabricated from polypropylene.
14. (Currently Amended) A support bracket according to claim [[9]] 8, further comprising at least one reinforcing rib adjacent to the third slot.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for securing wire fence elements to fence posts having T-shaped cross-sections with a leg and two cross-arms, the method comprising the following steps:

providing a first support bracket including a first lateral retainer defining a first slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of a fence post and a first tab extending from the first lateral retainer, a second lateral retainer defining a second slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of the fence post and a second tab extending from the second lateral retainer, each of the slots having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein, and a third slot adapted and constructed to receive a leg of the fence post, the third slot being generally perpendicular to the first and second slots and having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the ~~cross-arm~~ leg to be received therein;

providing a second support bracket including a first lateral retainer defining a first slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of a fence post and a first tab extending from the first lateral retainer, a second lateral retainer defining a second slot adapted and constructed to receive a cross-arm of the fence post and a second tab extending from the second lateral retainer, each of the slots having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width, length, and configuration of the cross-arm to be received therein, and a third slot adapted and constructed to receive a leg of the fence post, the third slot being generally perpendicular to the first and second slots and having a width, length, and configuration generally conforming to a width length, and configuration of the ~~cross-arm~~ leg to be received therein;

~~mounting the first bracket to a post using the tabs of the first bracket for~~
~~leverage to open the slots of the first bracket for insertion of the~~
~~first fence post cross-arms in a first position in which the leg of the~~
~~first fence post is received in the third slot of the first bracket; and~~

~~mounting the second bracket to a post using the tabs of the second bracket~~
~~for leverage to open the slots of the second bracket for insertion of~~
~~the second fence post cross-arms in a second position in which the~~
~~leg of the second post extends opposite the third slot of the second~~
~~bracket.~~

16. (Canceled)
17. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim [[16]] 15, wherein the steps of providing a first and second bracket comprise fabricating the brackets from a relatively flexible electrically insulative material.
18. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein the steps of providing a first and second bracket comprise fabricating the brackets from a thermoplastic material.
19. (Original) A method according to claim 18, wherein the steps of providing a first and second bracket comprise fabricating the brackets from polypropylene.
20. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim [[16]] 15, wherein the steps of providing a first and second bracket comprise providing at least one reinforcing rib adjacent to the third slot.

21. (Currently Amended) A support bracket for securing a wire fence element to a T-shaped fence post having a leg and two cross-arms, the bracket comprising:

first and second lateral retainers defining respective first and second interior slots arranged at a slightly increasable oblique angle with respect to each other, each slot having interior dimensions only slightly exceeding exterior dimensions of a respective cross-arm of the fence post;

a third interior slot generally directed oppositely from a bisector of the oblique angle, and having interior dimensions only slightly exceeding exterior dimensions of the leg of the fence post;

first and second tabs connected to the ~~bracket~~ respective first and second lateral retainers adjacent the respective first and second slots, each tab being externally directed at an angle and by an amount sufficient to enable a user to apply leverage by hand to increase the oblique angle and thereby enable insertion and removal of the cross-arms into their respective first and second slots;

in which the bracket is mountable to the post either with the leg received within the third slot, or with the leg extending opposite the third slot.